

Our team has been busy on the <u>River Darent</u> near Shoreham, Kent, delivering a new phase of habitat improvements to help this precious chalk stream thrive. Working with volunteers from <u>Darent Valley Trout Fishers</u>, we've installed a series of nature-inspired features that create the conditions wild brown trout and other fish species need to recover and flourish.

## Working with nature to reshape a healthy river

Chalk streams like the Darent depend on clean gravels, varied flows and plenty of in-stream structure to support spawning fish and young wildlife. Over time, sections of the channel can become over-widened or simplified, leaving fewer places for trout to shelter, feed or reproduce.



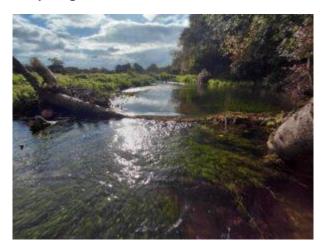
Brown trout © South East Rivers Trust

To bring natural processes back into play, our team installed:

- Large woody material, mimicking what would naturally fall into the river after a storm.
- Hinged living trees, carefully lowered to create cover and complexity while keeping roots anchored.
- Whole trees placed in the channel, providing instant habitat and encouraging the river to move and reshape itself.

These natural materials narrow the channel in places, protect the banks and create the varied flow patterns that a healthy chalk stream needs. By deflecting water, they introduce faster and slower currents, helping the river scour gravels in some areas and deposit them in others. This

reshaping leads to **clean, loose gravels essential for trout spawning**, alongside new **pools, riffles and refuge areas** for young fish and other wildlife.



The River Darent at Shoreham, Kent © South East Rivers Trust

## Creating meanders and space for wildlife

One of the standout features is a large **brash and woody berm**, designed to guide the river into a gentle meander. Over time, this structure will support marginal plants, provide valuable cover for wildlife and encourage the river to re-establish a more natural flow path.

## Powered by volunteers and partnership

These improvements were made possible thanks to the brilliant volunteers from **Darent Valley Trout Fishers**, whose hard work and expertise helped bring the project to life.

The project is funded by the <u>Environment Agency</u> and forms part of our ongoing programme to restore natural river processes along the River Darent — helping this chalk stream become more resilient for the future.